Conscious Teaching
Unlocking the Secrets of Great Teaching

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Making Mid-Year Changes in Your Classroom

Needing to make changes weeks or months after a school year has begun doesn't mean you've failed at anything. It means you are a reflective and committed teacher. It can be easy to get caught up in feelings of disappointment when something you've tried hasn't gone well, but not only will you feel better once you've made a positive change, you'll also be modeling for your students how to effectively adjust when things aren't going the way they should. Below is a simple and effective protocol for successfully making changes in your classroom once you are past the first weeks of school.

1. **Make a List:** Make a list of the top 3-5 changes you want to see in your classroom.

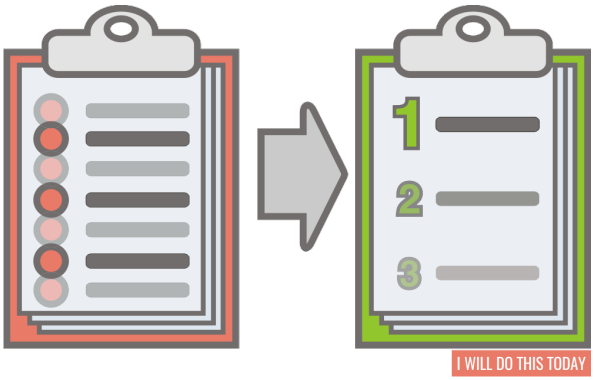
2. **Prioritize the List:** Put the list in priority order. Make sure that #1 is *doable*. If it's too complicated, break it up into smaller steps, assigning a number to each step.

3. **Start with #1 Only:** Start by addressing #1 only! Introduce a change (a new policy, procedure, routine, or technique). **Check out our handy guide below for how to do this**

4. **Start Small:** If you teach secondary, start with your favorite (or easiest!) class. If you teach elementary, start during your favorite (or easiest!) part of the day. This is the class that's most forgiving or the time of day that's most calm and relaxed.

5. **Spread Your Success:** After the change is working, introduce it to the rest of your classes or the rest of your day.

6. **Give it 8-10 days.** Don't give up too early or too easily. Consistently reinforcing something new for at least 8 school days is an essential part of making it work. During these 8 days, reflect, refine, and modify as necessary.



No matter what kind of change you're making, the way you introduce and teach it will have a huge impact on how successful it will be. We suggest using the guide on the next page.

A Guide for Re-Introducing, Reinforcing, or Making Changes to a Classroom Procedure or Expectation

See K-12 sample lesson plans based on this guide here:
https://www.consciousteaching.com/lesson-plans-procedures/

- **Introduce the Change.** Don't blame, don't apologize, just introduce. For example, "Class, this hasn't been going as well as we'd like, so today we're going to try something new." *(It's okay to let your class know that something isn't going well – trust us, they already know!)*

- **Model and Practice.** You might start by modeling (or having a small group of students model) the new change. You can add humor by having students model both ideal and not-so-ideal versions. Once the new protocol or expectations are clear, have the entire class practice. In this initial learning phase, the focus is on learning, not accountability.

- **Check for Understanding.** Through practice, make sure that students understand the new change. Use a variety of methods to check for understanding, including verbal, visual, and written assessment.

- **Add Accountability and Incentive.** When it is reasonable to assume that students understand the change, add some gentle accountability and some incentive. Examples of gentle accountability include assigning additional small-group, lunch, or after-school practice with the teacher for individual students who are not meeting the new expectation. Examples of incentive include offering points towards a class-wide reward every time 90% or more of students are meeting the new expectation.

Pro Tip: Don't worry about the time that will be lost in slowing down to re-teach a procedure or expectation in a new or different way. The time lost to the re-teaching and practicing will all be regained as your classroom runs more smoothly for the rest of the year as a result.

Classroom procedures and expectations are like train tracks and the content we teach is like the train. It ultimately takes much less total time and energy to polish and maintain your procedural railroad tracks throughout the year than it does to continually try and fix derailments due to broken or neglected tracks.